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U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
P.O. Box 30307 M/S 010
North Las Vegas, NV 89036[0307]

Dear Sirs:

Unfortunately I wasn't able to attend the meeting about shipments of spent nuclear fuel bound for Yucca mountain. But as a Ph.D. physicist who has taught university classes on energy and the environment, I want to emphasize a few points, and add this letter to the record.

1 Discussion seems to center on how to guarantee safe storage of fuel rods for 10,000 years, but this misses the point and is not really necessary or desirable. It is more desirable (and also easier) to reprocess the fuel rods and use them up as nuclear fuel. That would produce much electrical energy and also eliminate the long-term storage problems.

Although spent-fuel reprocessing has been politically blocked in the U.S., it is being done in other countries. The technical problems are not too hard to solve nor too difficult for our industrial experts.]

2 How else will our electric-power needs be met in the coming decades than by nuclear power? The concerns over global warming are underscored by a recent report showing 1999 as the fifth hottest year world-wide, in spite of a La Nina event that helped keep temperatures down. The hottest years were 1998, 1997, 1995, 1990, and, fifth, 1999. According to the report, satellite data which showed no warming in the lower atmosphere were partially caused by volcanic eruptions in 1982 and 1991, leading to greater agreement among scientists that global warming is a serious problem.

The best solution to global warming is to emphasize energy conservation while quickly transferring our electric generating capacity from fossil fuels to nuclear.] **THUS IT BECOMES IMPERATIVE NOT TO USE YUCCA MOUNTAIN** to lock this fuel away without reprocessing.

1 Instead, temporary monitored retrievable storage is best, to have the fuel in one or more central locations when reprocessing is ready to begin.

American Indian or Native American tribal lands are a problem, since these people often oppose the storage projects as causes of long-term damage to their

environment. This emphasizes the need to do the temporary storage on land that is subject to regular state and federal laws.

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It is also clear that greater safety can be achieved in the transportation if the temporary storage facility is on the railroad line and is accessible by railroad spur.

I notice R.J. Hoffman compared the transportation hazards to those of shipping "gasoline or toilet paper or whatever." He's right, except gasoline is much more likely to cause injuries and fatalities. He should have compared it to hauling some other cargo, like large boulders or large concrete pipes.

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The Pigeon Spur Fuel Storage Facility has all the advantages discussed in this letter over the Yucca Mountain project. Either PSF or Pigeon Spur would preserve the fuel for future use, although Pigeon Spur has several distinct advantages--in transportation safety, in remoteness, in U.S. land, in earthquake safety, in RR access, and in its plans to reprocess fuel. Please consider using Pigeon Spur for spent fuel storage needs.

The most serious point is that when panic sets in about fossil fuels and global warming, we need to be rapidly building our nuclear capacity via reprocessing, not shutting it down.

Sincerely,



Steven C. Barrowes, Ph.D.

Board Member

Pigeon Spur Spent Fuel Storage Facility